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an etching step in which the workpiece is etched over a specific length of etching time by applying the biasing power to said electrode and a film formation step in which a protective film is formed as an etching mask at a surface of the workpiece over a specific length of film formation time while the biasing power is decreased or cut off are sequentially repeated, with the lengths of individual etching times and individual film formation times adjusted to be increased relative to the length of etching time as the etching process progresses.

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12. (New) A plasma etching method according to claim 1, wherein the length of etching time is relatively decreased as the etching process progresses.

REMARKS

By this Amendment, Applicants have canceled claims 7-11 without prejudice or disclaimer, amended claim 1, and added new claim 12. No new matter has been added. Claims 1-6 and 12 are pending.

In the Office Action dated April 2, 2003, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5 and 7-10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Okudaira et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,985,114); and rejected claims 1, 3-8, 10, and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Collins et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,888,414). Applicants have amended claim 1, rendering the Examiner's rejections moot. To the extent, however, that the Examiner may consider applying the above-mentioned rejections to claim 1 as amended, Applicants respectfully submit that such rejections would be improper since

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